

George <sup>Sum</sup>  
Sth Carolina

Mr. G. admitted March 8th 1820

no Propters.

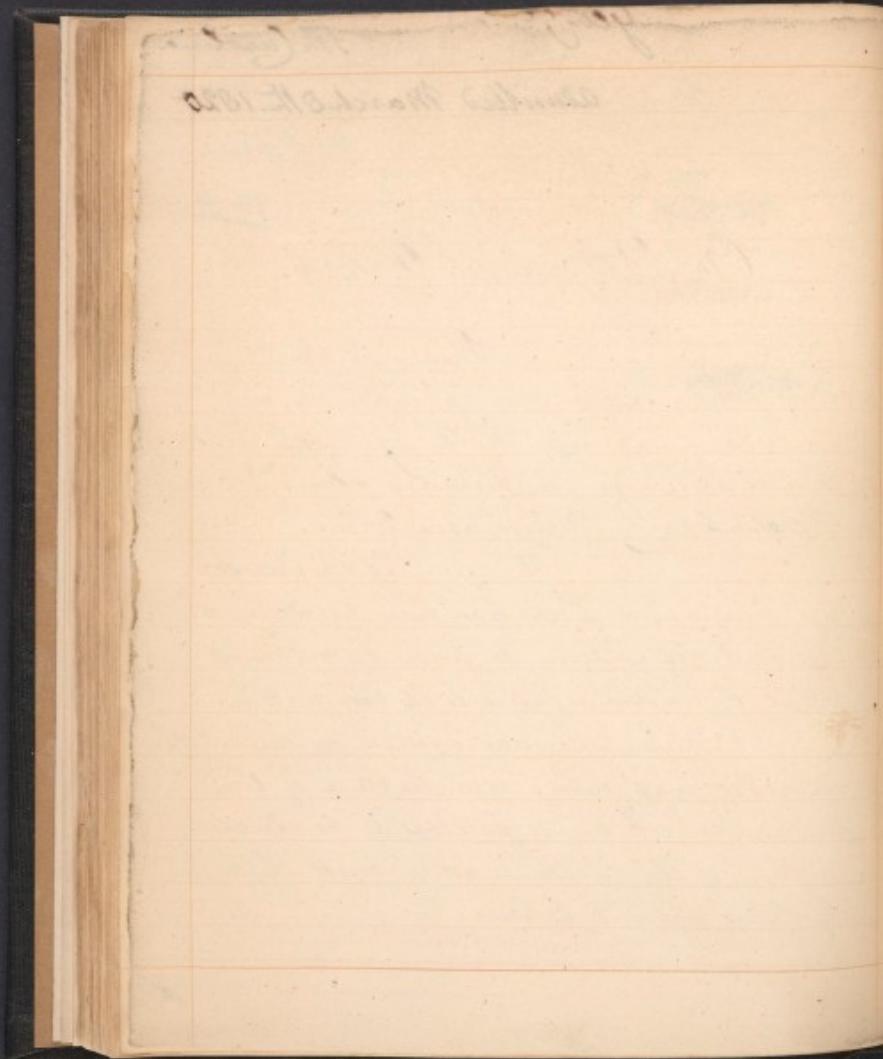
NO 3

## On Plegmasia Dolens.

Supperial swellings  
of the inferior extremities are called in our  
vernacular language Milk Siz, by the French  
depot de lait, by the German adams testum  
and technically Plegmasia Dolens.

Of the causes  
of this complaint little has been ascertained.  
Medical writers seem to have entertained  
different Opinions relative to its true nature.

Mr. White, who has written on this subject,  
tho' he thought it was owing to a rupture of the  
lymphatics, which he believes to be effected  
by pressure of the child's head against the bone  
of the Pelvis during labour.



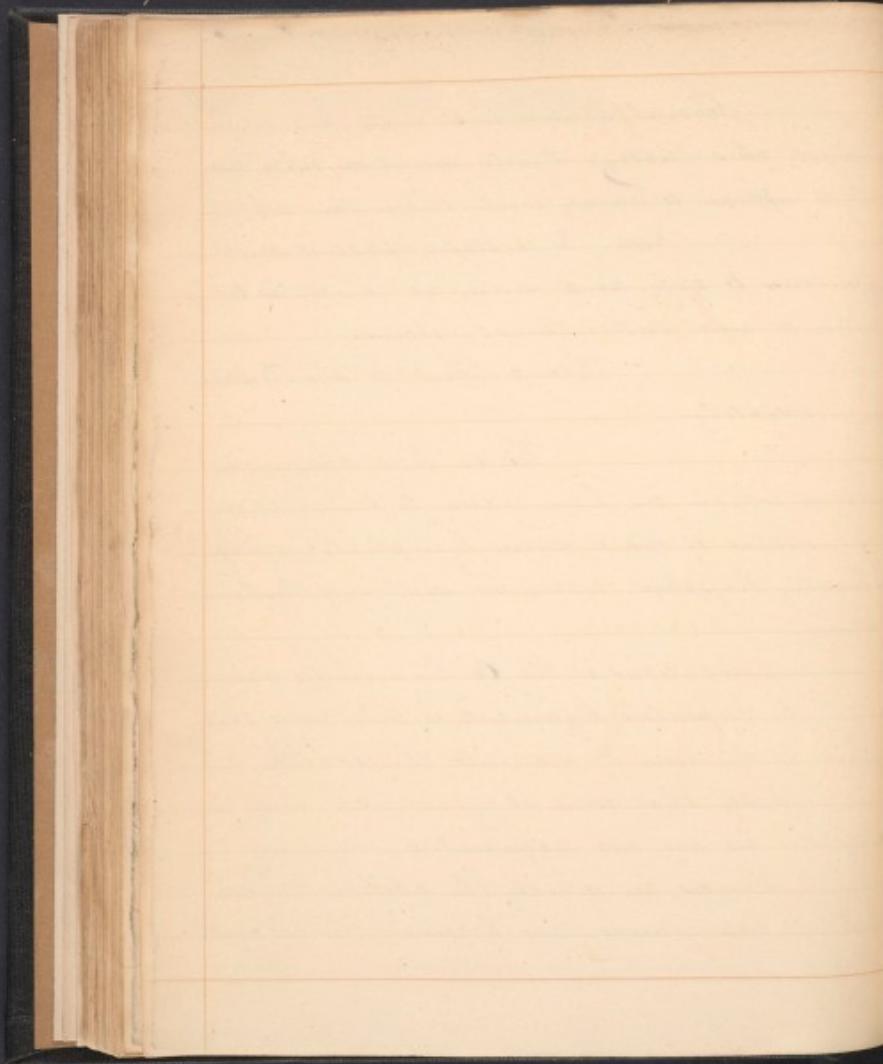
Serious arguments have been urged  
against this theory; I will mention one or two  
which appear to carry with them some weight.

First. It is stated that it sometimes  
supervenes to easy and natural as well as to  
difficult and protracted labours.

Second. That it should take place  
immediately.

Third. That cases are met  
with in which we have reason to believe that  
the rupture of one or more lymphatic vessels  
actually happens, where no swelling of this kind  
follows.

In dislocations of the Co<sup>n</sup> humeri for example,  
when the capsular ligament is torn, and the  
head of the bone forced into the acetilla, it is  
very probable that some of lymphatics may give  
way, yet we are not acquainted with any  
circumstances, in which the absorbent vessels,  
or conglobate glands have become enlarged and



hardened, accompanied with this peculiar kind of effusion, though such dislocations have not been reduced for months.

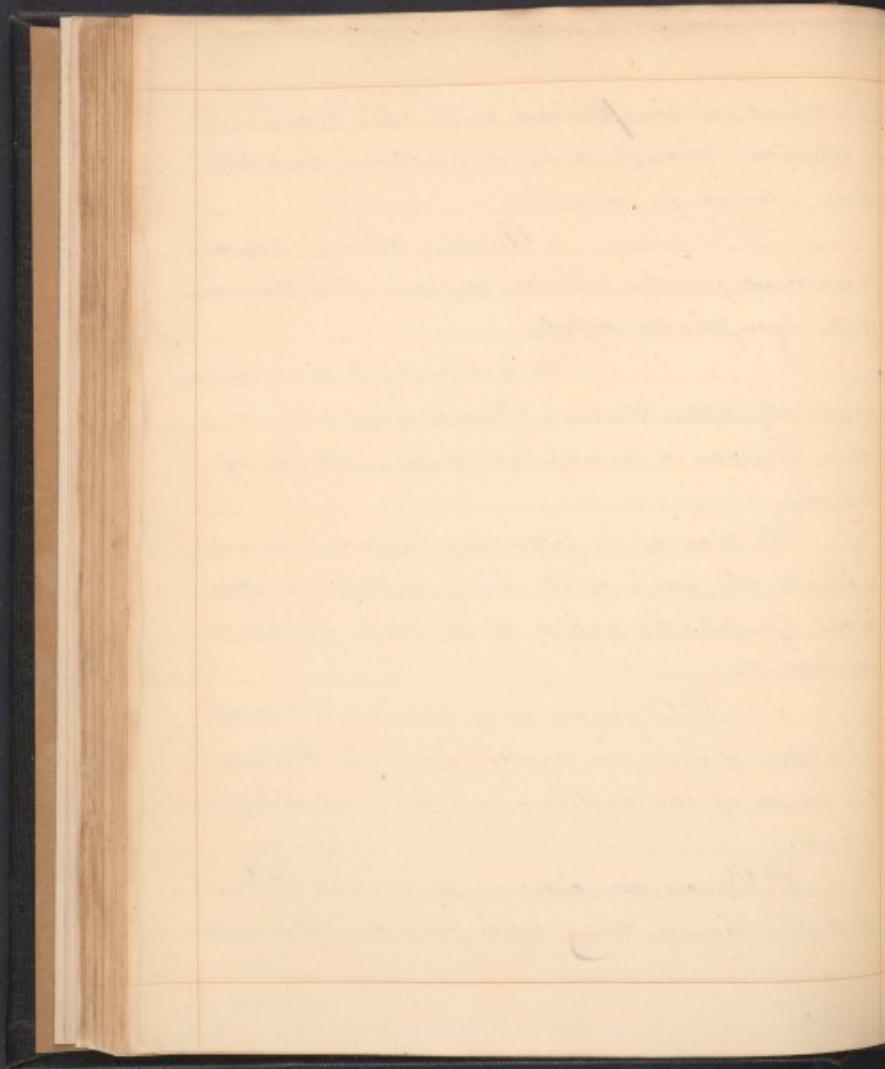
Another theory advanced to account for this disease, supposed an inflammation of the lymphatic vessels.

It is thought to occur more frequently after uterine hemorrhage than any other previous or subsequent circumstance of delivery.

The fact of its following profuse hemorrhage subjects the idea of its being inflammation of the lymphatic vessels, or at least makes it doubtful.

D'Orman is of opinion that the absorption of sanguineous matter from the placenta is the cause of the swelling and pain of the inguinal glands.

Dr. Dewees coincides in part with Dr. Hull that the disease may arise from an inflammation

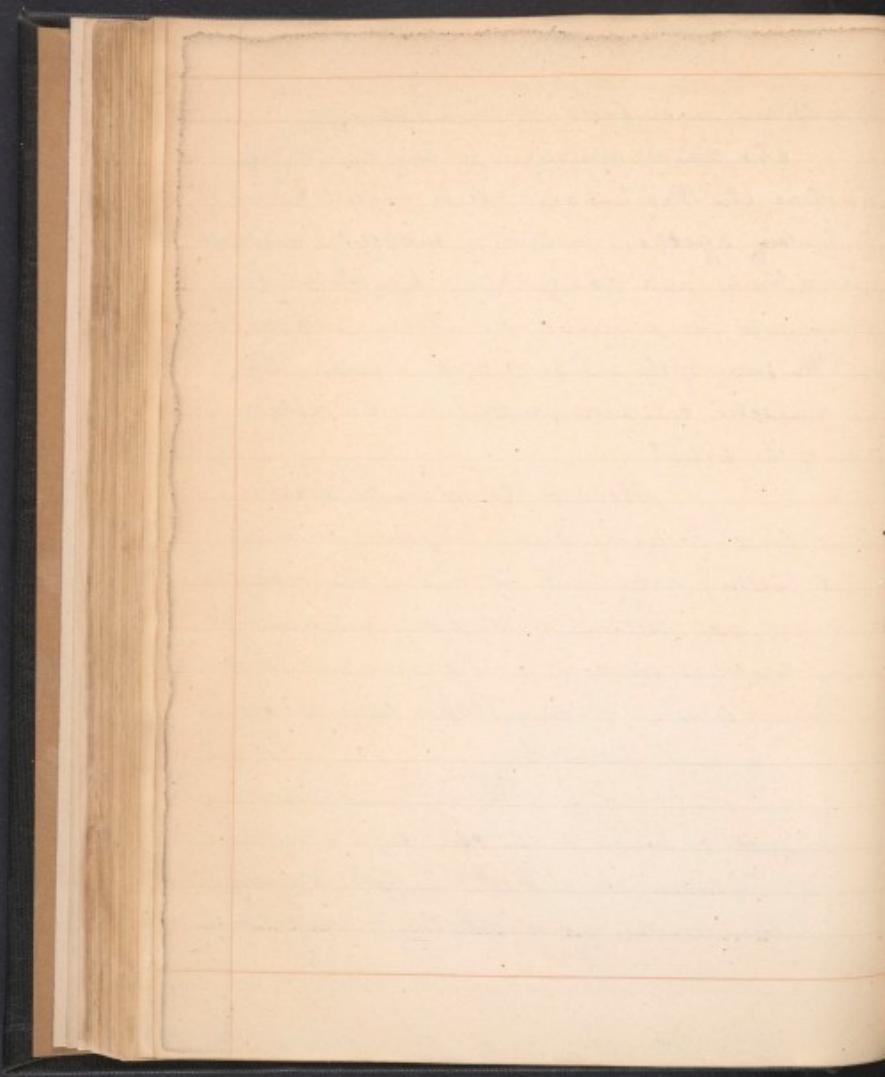


of the cellular membrane of the limb.

No doubt remains in my mind, says Hull that the Prodromal disease consists in an inflammatory affection, producing suddenly & considerably effusion of Serum and exuding lymph from the exhalent into the cellular membrane, and goes on to say, The seat of the inflammation I believe to be in the muscles cellular, membrane and inferior surface of the cutis?

Professor Stanes in his lecture on this subject observes, From whatever cause this purporeal swelling may arise it differs from edematous in generally not pitting, or at least in a very slight degree, by pressure and it would generally seem to be owing to some circumstance that occurs after delivery of the patient.

The disease occurs from the first 24 hours to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> week, commonly between the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> day after delivery. If we believe writers no constipation or condition

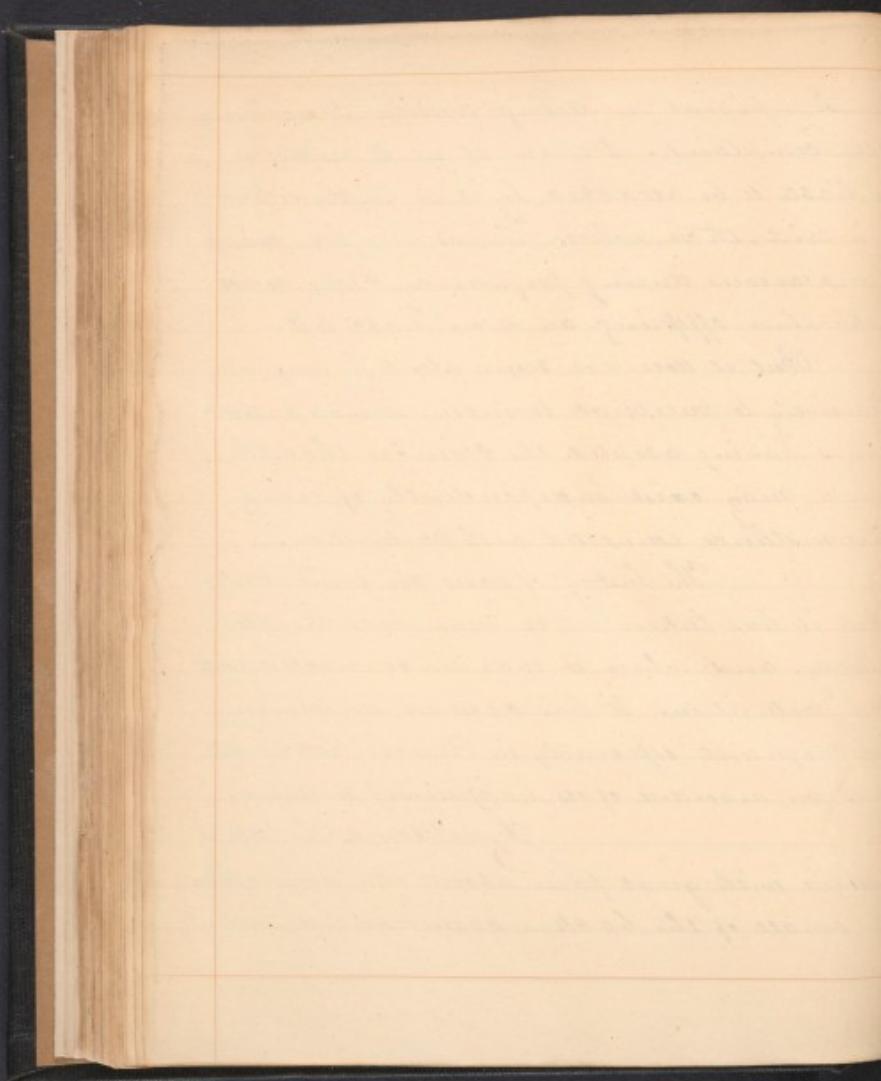


can be applied rendering women obnoxious  
to the complaint. Women of all descriptions  
are liable to be attacked by it in childhood; but  
it is said those, whose frames have been pinched  
or unaccustomed during pregnancy, & who do not  
nurture their offspring, are more liable to it.

But it does not seem also to be confined  
exclusively to pregnant women, several medical  
writers having adopted the opinion that the  
disease may exist independently of every  
circumstance connected with parturition.

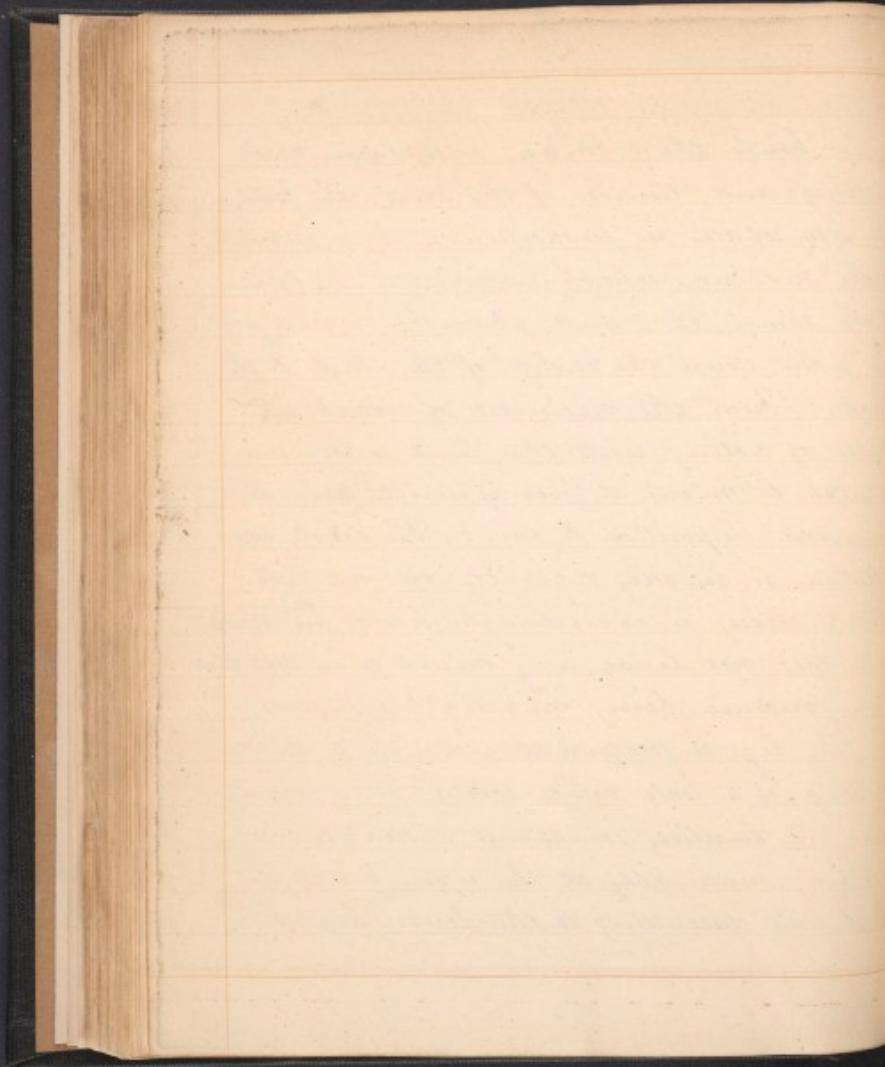
The history of cases are found detailed  
where it has taken place some months after  
delivery, and where it was unconnected with  
any parturition. It has occurred in women  
not pregnant especially in Cancer Uteri and  
Cases are recorded of its happening in men.

*Symptoms.* The patient  
is plagued with great pain about the groins hips  
and small of the back, accompanied with



considerable fever. After the pain has continued a few hours the woman complains of the swelling and tension of the part, the pain usually abates in proportion to the increase of the swelling, which extends to the lumbar of the same side, and advances rapidly from the joint down the inside of the thigh to the knee. From the moment of attack all power of acting with the limb is lost every attempt to move it gives exquisite pain and frequent disposition to faint. The whole constitution is quickly & greatly affected by it. The swelling is exceedingly hard and tense and does not leave any mark or indentation upon pressure being made by the fingers.

The leg is preternaturally hot, smooth, shining of a pale white colour: It is said that the swelling sometimes instead of commencing invariably at the upper part of the limb and descending to the lower, begins in



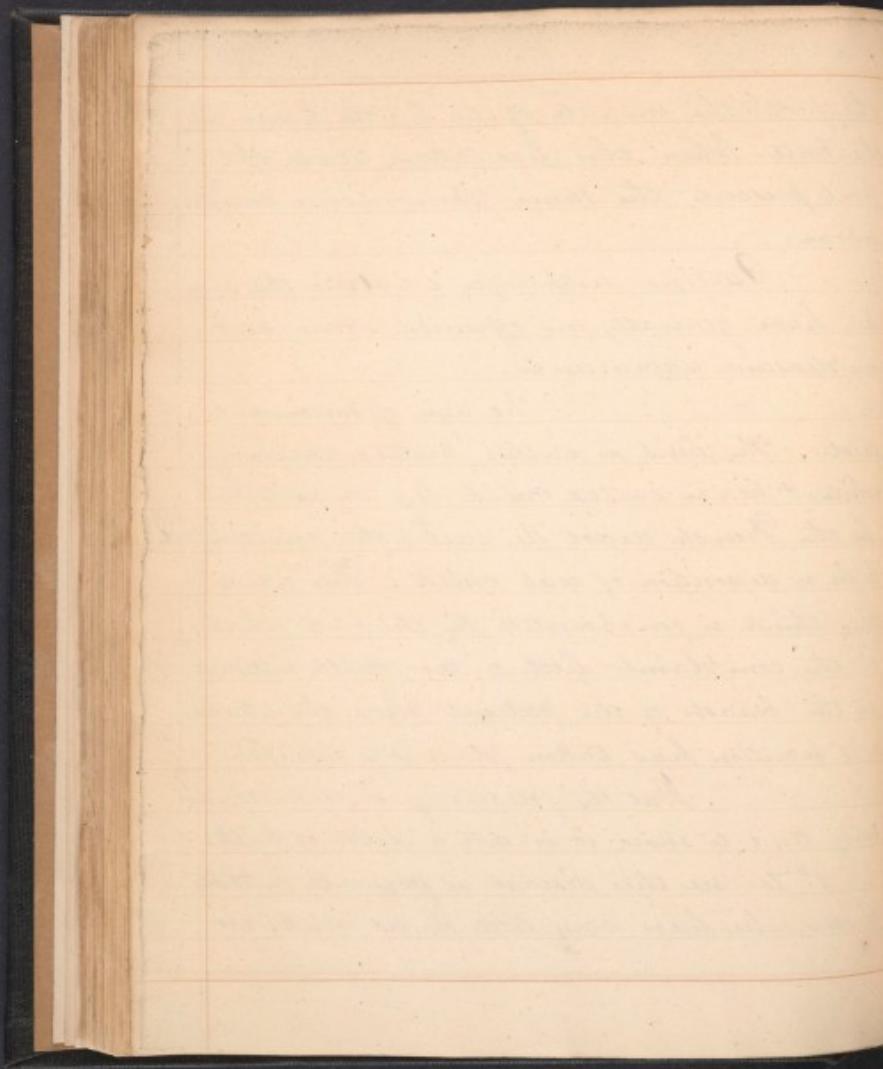
the foot, the middle of the leg, the knee and  
the knee. When this has taken place the  
limb presents the same phenomena noticed  
above.

Uterine discharges whatever they may  
be, have generally an offensive odour and  
unpleasant appearance.

No sign of inflammation  
exists. The limb is rather preferentially  
white, & hence called milk leg, or as termed  
by the French dépôt de lait, they considering it  
to be a deposition of real milk. This idea  
they think is corroborated by the fact, that  
in the complaint little or no milk is found  
in the breasts of the patient before the attack,  
or if secretion has taken place it is suppressed.

But the following circumstances  
will tend to show it is not a deposit of milk.

1<sup>o</sup> We see this disease as frequently in those  
persons, who have very little or no milk, not



even sucking their Infants, as in those who have abundance.

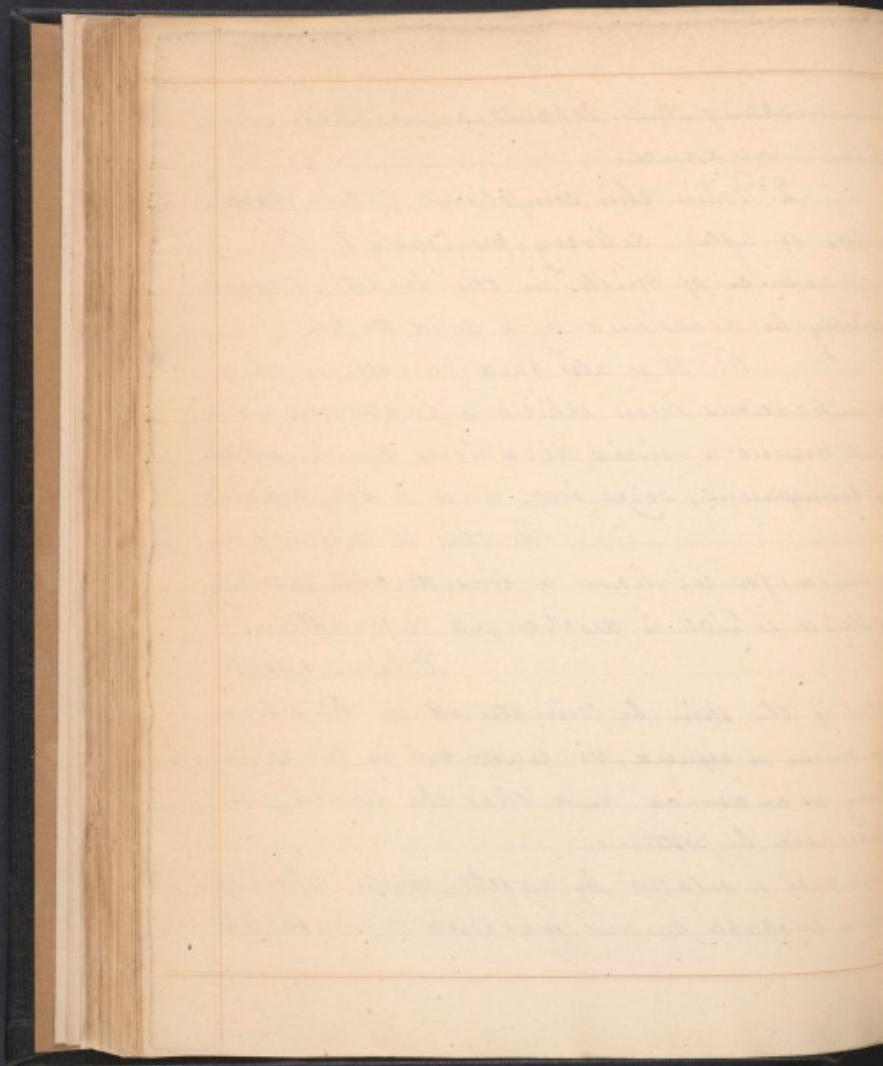
2<sup>d</sup>. When this complaint takes place either before or after delivery, previously to the appearance of Milk in the breasts, it cannot possibly be occasioned by a depot de lait.

3<sup>d</sup>. It is also said purulencies and excretions never exhibit a lactescence discharge but present a viscid tenacious serum, which is transparent, oozes out, and is very difficult.

In this it differs from edema, for we have a considerable quantity of fluid which is discharged by pressure.

D. Burns asserts that if the skin be punctured in this disease, no serum is effused, at least not in the same way as in ascites, and that the swelling is increased by posture.

A case is related by another writer where after every probable means was tried to remove the

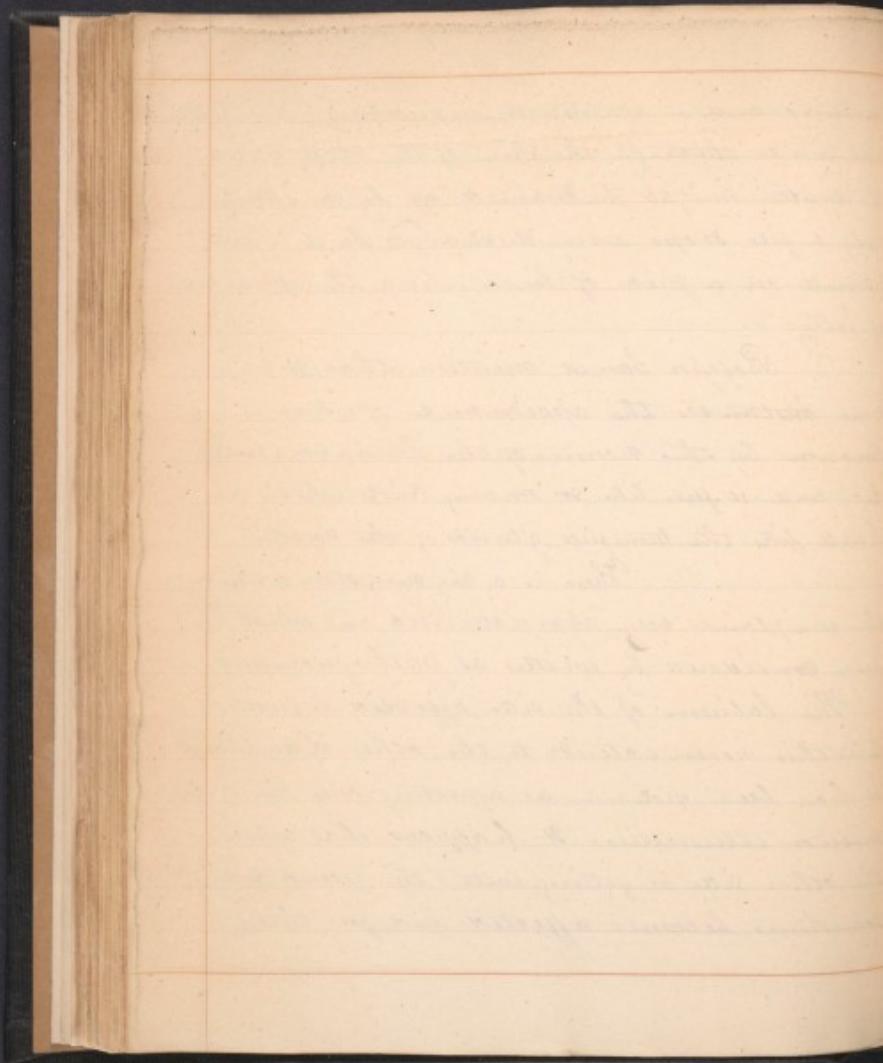


swelling, and it continued increasing; an incision was made through the skin of the thigh, that the matter might be drained off by an issue, only a few drops were discharged by it which received on a piece of linen, had the appearance of jelly:

Professor James mentions, that it has in some instances the appearance of what is known by the name of the Barbadoes swelling, and it feels like so many knots which are hard like the tumors glands of the neck.

There is a circumstance attending this complaint very characteristic and which has been considered by writers as pathognomonic.

The labium of the side affected is swollen, but this never extends to the other side, though it has been noticed, as affecting only one of the inferior extremities. It happens that where the other side is getting well, the same side sometimes becomes affected and goes through

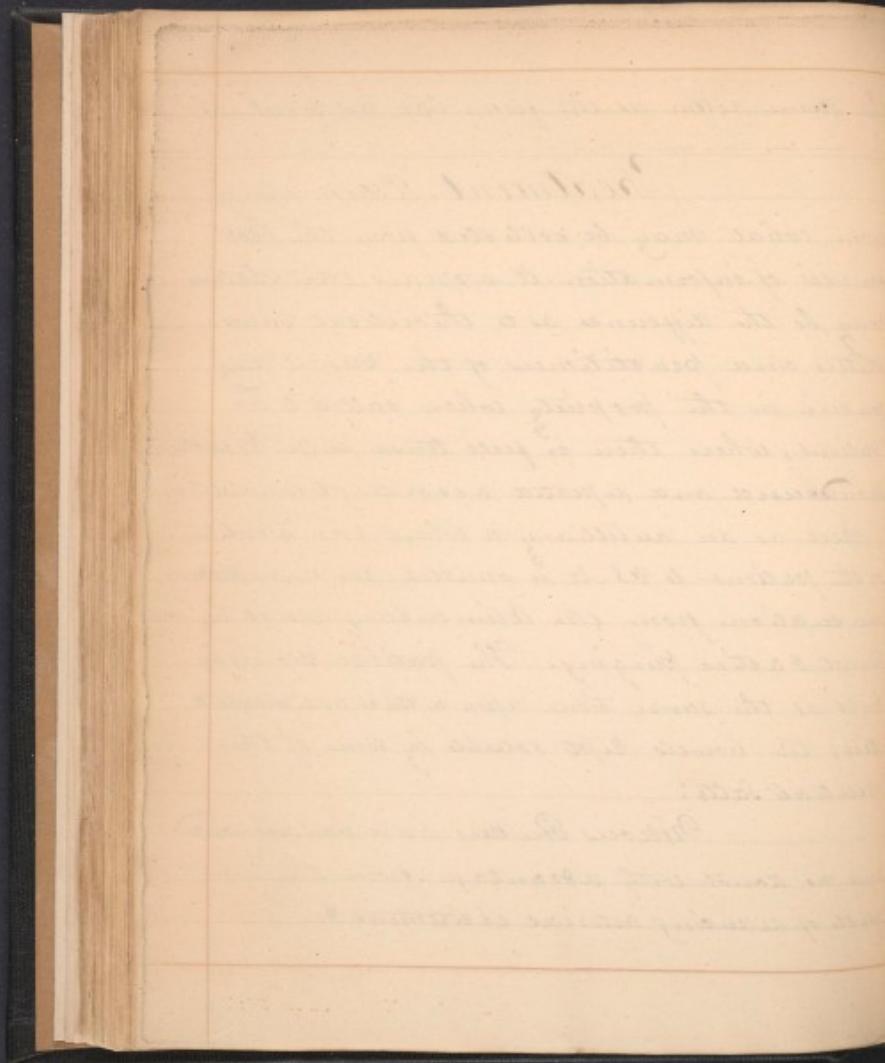


the same rotore as the first, but not so violent.

**Treatment.** Determining from what may be collected from the best sources of information it appears that whatever may be the difference as to theoretical views, doctors and practitioners of the present day concur in the propriety when called to a patient, where there is full tense pulse, Constriction should be used and repeated according to circumstances.

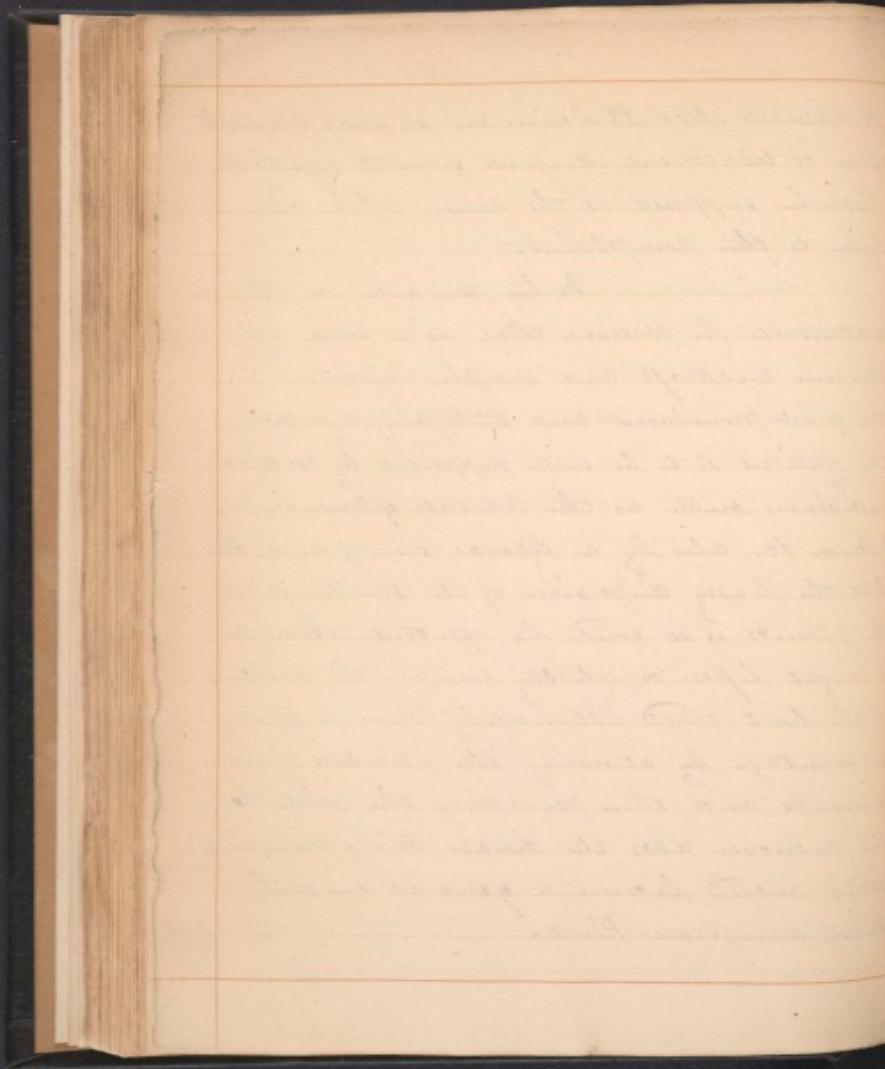
First as an aperient or where from a dislike of the patient to us. it is omitted, we may produce evacuations from the alimentary canal by Smart & active purging. The patient should be kept at the same time upon a strict antiphlogistic diet, the bowels kept soluble by some of the neutral salts.

Nitroous Powders have been recommended and no doubt with advantage, from their effects of depressing irritability & excitement &c.



It appears that Dr Denman pursued a different plan of treatment, derived from the hypothesis which he supposed as the cause which gave rise to this complaint.

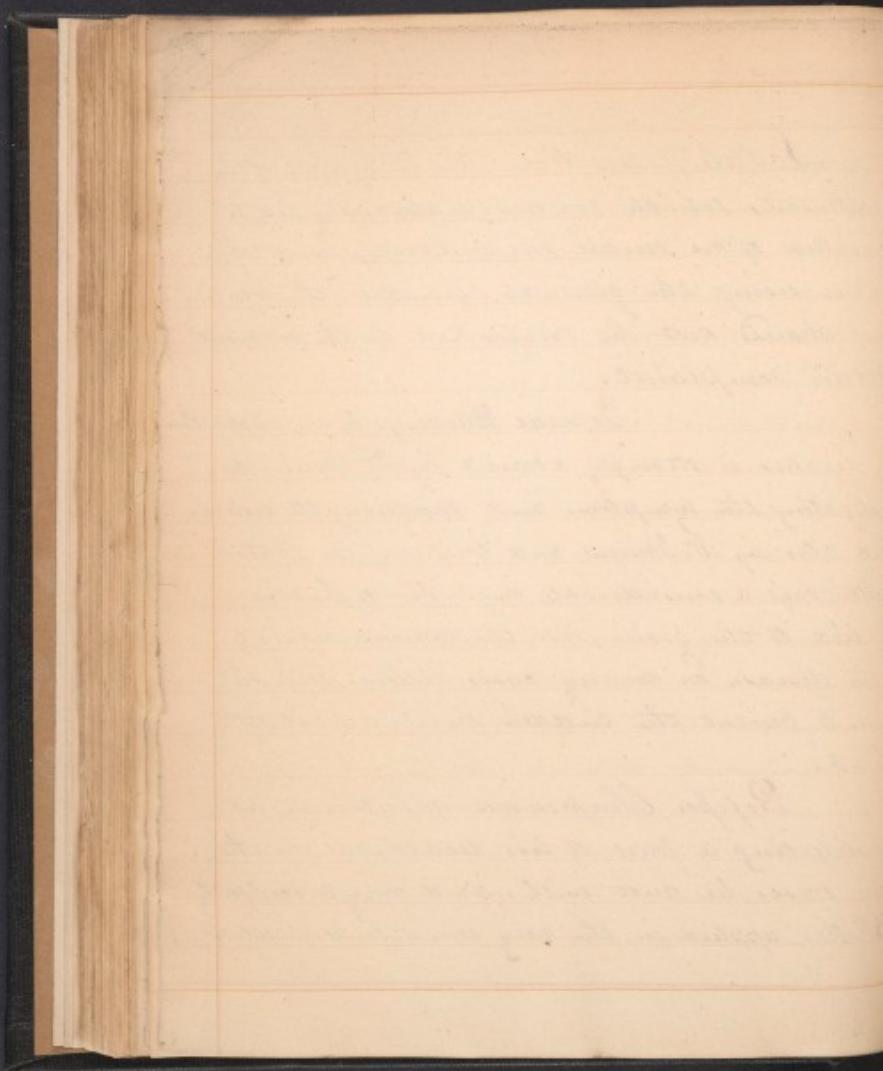
In his remarks on the treatment, he observes, that as a sense of extreme weakness and excessive irritation is the most prominent and distressing symptom, the patient is to be well supported by cordial medicines, such as the Acetate of Ammonia, Opium &c. also by a liberal use of wine, and that the hasty dispersion of the swelling of the glands if it could be effected, though it might lessen or wholly remove the swelling of the limb would ultimately prove a great disadvantage by allowing the absorbed virus to escape and thus pervading the whole body, and moreover adds the disease being primarily local would become a general one of the most dangerous kind.



Local remedies. This is a part of the treatment, which we are naturally led to consider of no small importance, and while we are using the general remedies, the local ones should not be overlooked in the treatment of this complaint.

Topical Bleeding by the application of leeches is strongly advised by Dr. Stenius as mitigating the symptoms and shortening the disease, and also by Dr. Burns and Willan. The latter writer says a considerable number of leeches applied to the groin, at the commencement of the disease in many cases relieves pain and seems to prevent the sudden enlargement of the limb.

Professor Chapman mentions as constituting a part of his treatment in the few cases he met with, and very successfully, blisters applied in the very common cleft of

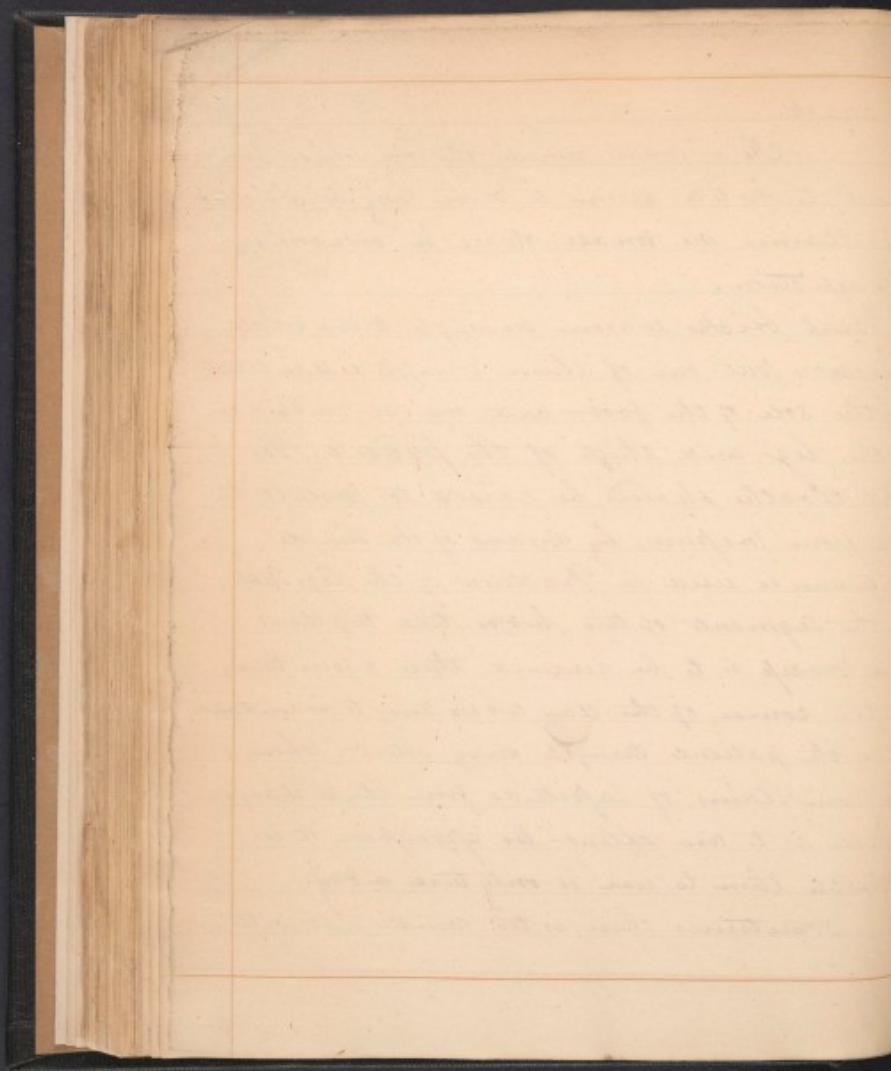


the attack.

As a local remedy the one which I am  
about to notice seems to prove very beneficial,  
and claims no small share in overcoming  
this affection.

Heat bricks warm enough to evaporate  
vinegar, put one of them wrapped up in cloths  
at the sole of the foot and one at each side  
of the leg and thigh of the patient. The  
bed cloaths should be raised to protect the  
leg from profuse, by means of the simple  
contrivance used in fractures of the leg, such  
as the segments of two hoops tied together:  
This process is to be renewed three or four times  
in the course of the day according to circumstances  
or as the patient's strength may allow, when  
the complaints of fatigued from the discharge,  
which is to an extent too offensive it is  
advisable then to use it only twice a day.

Sometimes there is too much rigor in the

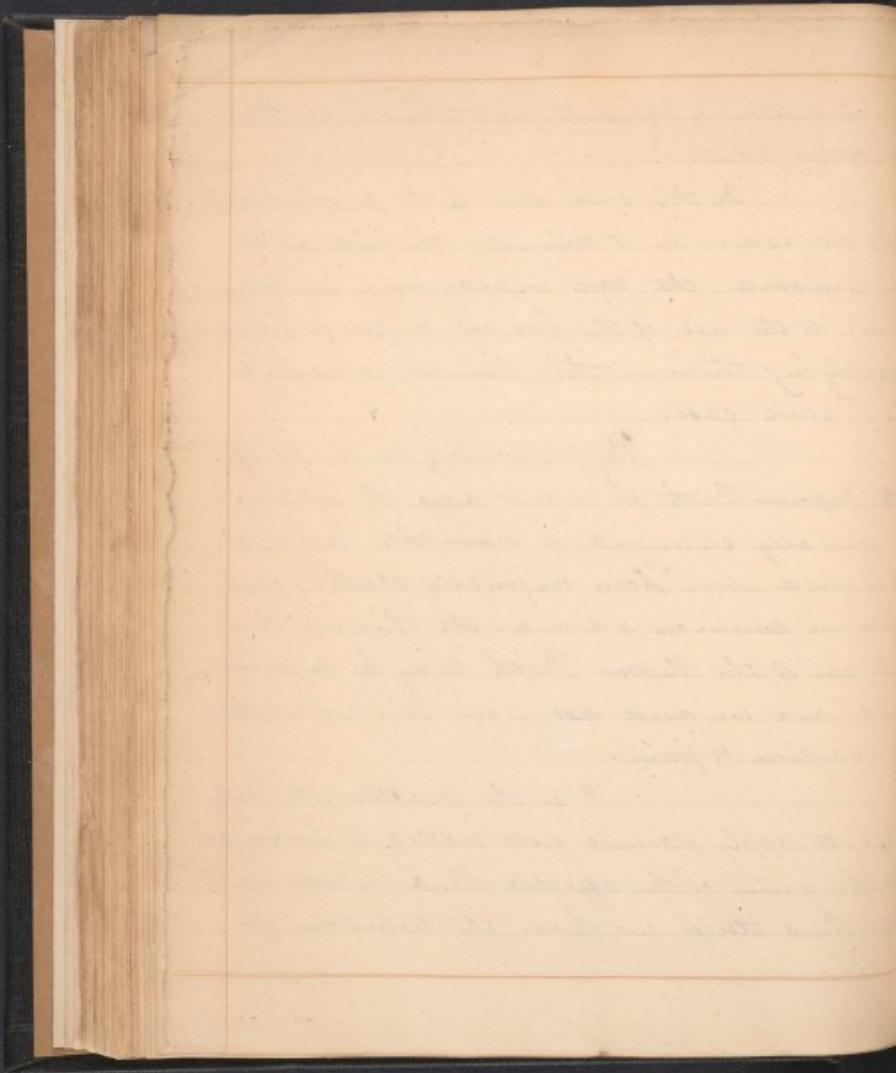


local action of the parts, and transcend the  
bounding point.

In this case then if the perspiration  
does not occur - in 15 minutes the blisters are to  
be removed, the parts wiped, and we may  
resort to the use of the lancet or purge before  
applying them - this however appears to  
be a rare case.

By persevering in the use of  
the Napron Bath for a few days the swelling  
is generally changed, it now feels, having as  
I observed above been originally elastic, and  
becomes common adema. At this juncture  
the use of the Napron Bath may be dispensed  
with, and we need not recur to it unless there  
is a recurrence of pain.

It is the practice of us  
also, to apply flannel well soaked in hot water  
to the groin of the affected limb, as well as to  
the limb itself, we have the testimony of



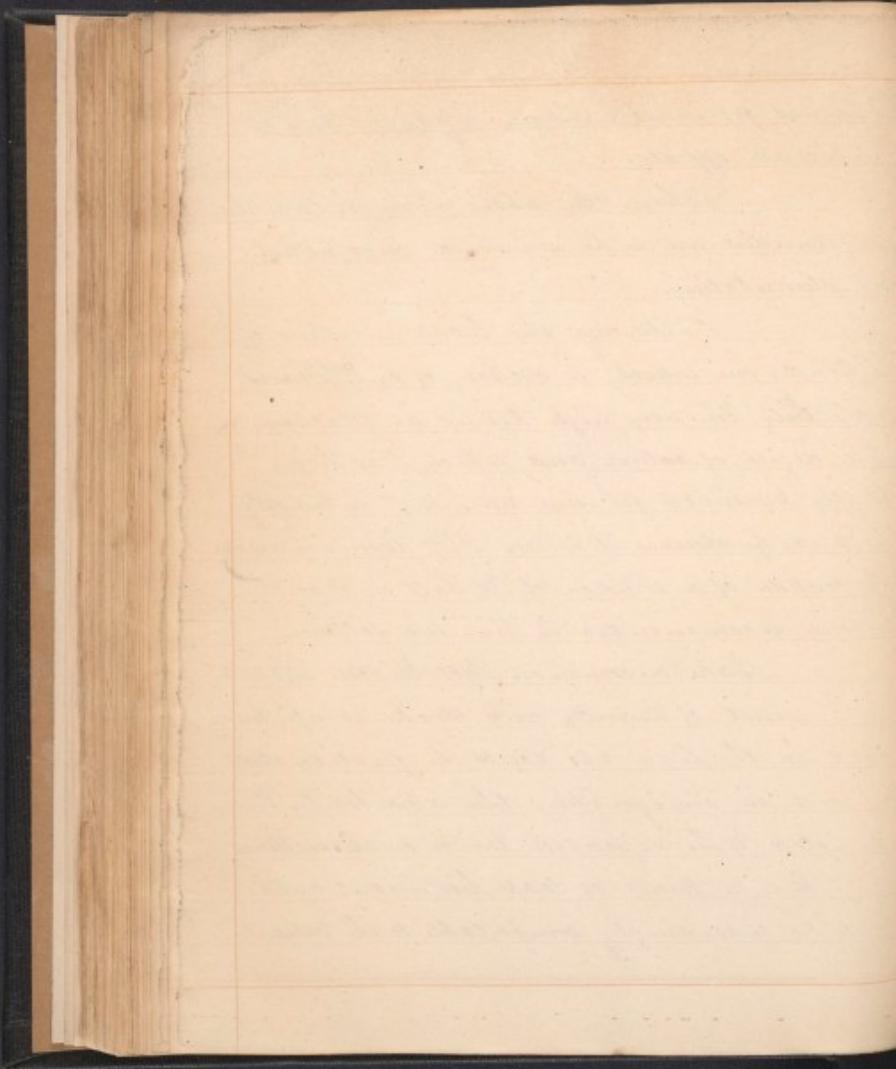
It comes from evidence in favour of its  
beneficial effects.

When the above changes take place  
other remedies are to be employed such as are  
more stimulating.

Among the local remedies of  
this kind, one which is spoken of by Dr. Deedes  
of this City in very high terms as attaching no  
small degree of value, and which has been  
liberally prescribed for some time past by himself,  
though, as he observes it is an Old Woman remedy.

It consists of a solution of Ox Gall in Brandy.  
The form recommended by him is as follows:

Bake a common Pall Bladder and put  
it in a quart of Brandy and shake it up. Take  
rubbed in the leg. It does the patient injury  
may aid in invigorating the abortive. This  
is directed to be repeated twice or three times  
a day. It is a kind of soap liniment and is  
said to be exceedingly comfortable to the patient.



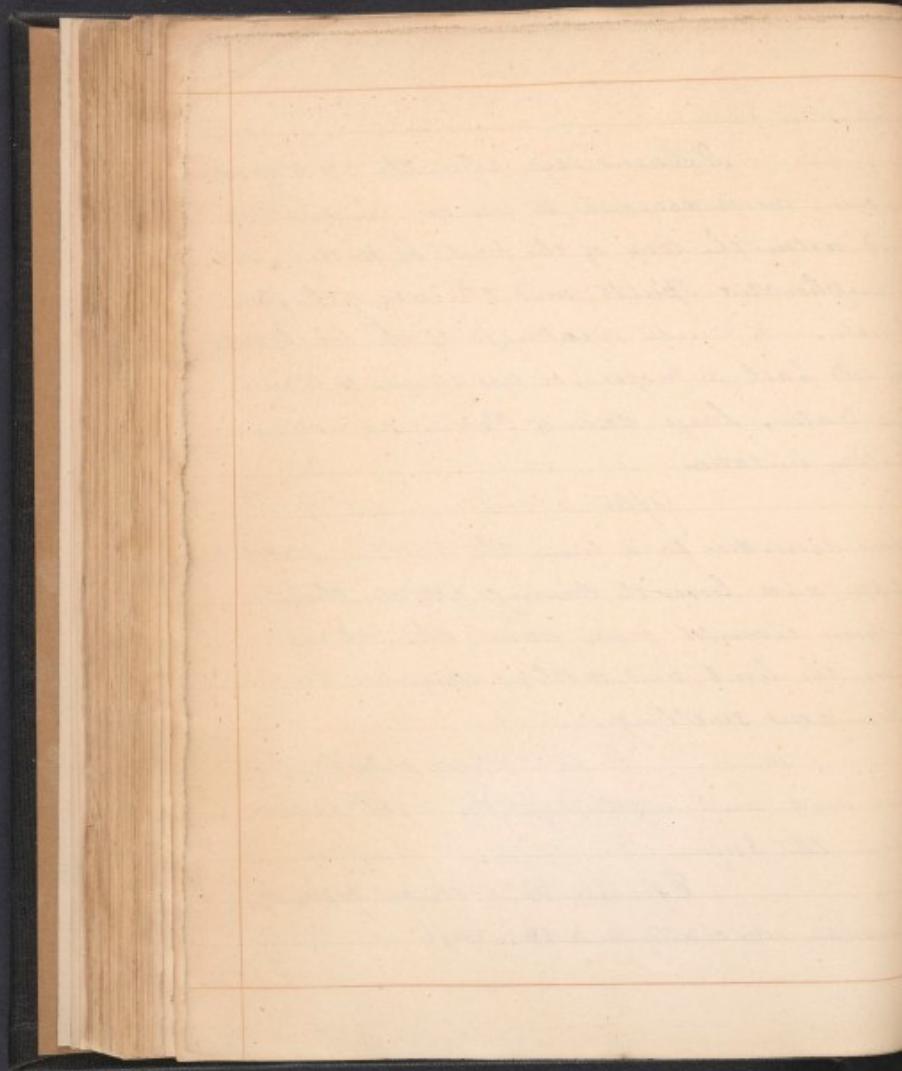
while it is fresh.

D<sup>r</sup>. Burns says, when the acute symptoms are over, we endeavour to remove the swelling, and restore the tone of the part, by friction with Camphorated Spirit, and the use of the fleshy brush. If much weakness of the limb remains the cold bath is proper, or sometimes of warm sea-water. Large doses of Opium are useful to allay irritation.

After a continuance of the above remedies for a time the swelling gradually abates and loses its shining aspect, the part is now exempt from pain, the patient can move the limb, and nothing remains but occasional swelling.

A bandage should be now used and applied pretty tight from above the knee.

Exercise in a small degree is serviceable especially in a Paroxysm.



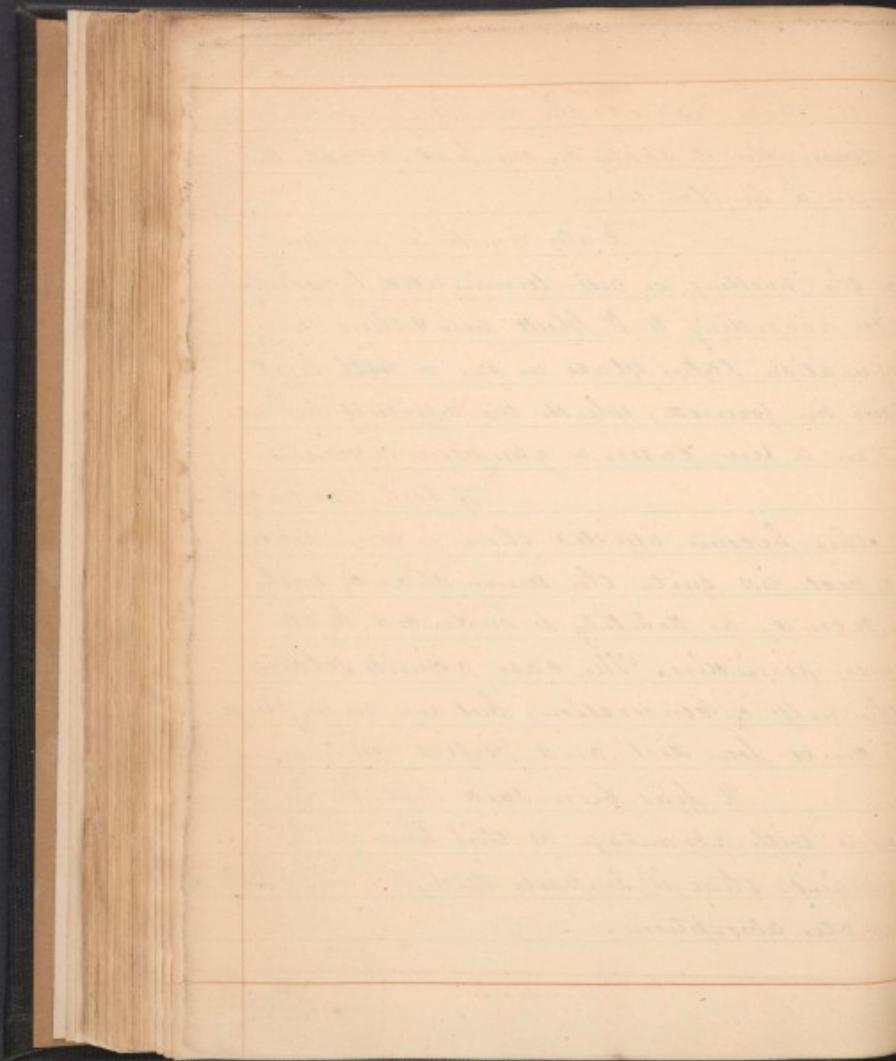
As I have noticed, the disease, unfortunately sometimes after it abates in one limb, attacks the other in a similar way.

It also sometimes happens, that the swelling is not terminated by resolution.

For according to Dr. Ghell now & then a suppuration takes place in one or both legs & ulcers are formed, which are difficult to heal, and in a few cases, a gangrene supervenes.

If both legs, one after the other become affected there is some reason to expect not quite the same chance with the second, as debility is induced by the former remedies. The case admits seldom of the help of Venesection, but we may purge and minister low diet and perfect rest.

It has been said that Nosis may be used with advantage at this time of the complaint; that it imports weight, and also promotes absorption.



The manner in which it is used is by Anointing  
the leg with it. For this purpose the leg is  
made bare and a tub is placed under it,  
in which place a handful of Coals and cast  
some Rosin on them. A blanket should be spread  
over the tub. Continue this 8 or 10 minutes at  
a time.

To conclude what I have to say  
relative to the cure of this disease I may add  
that we may generally with some degree  
of confidence hope for a cure, where the  
remedies enumerated are employed under  
proper regulations and a constant attention  
to the other circumstances of the disease.

